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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SKOPJE 000483

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STATE FOR EUR/SCE, USNATO FOR AMBASSADOR NULAND

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: GOM PLEDGES CONTINUED FOCUS ON NATO REFORMS

REF: A. STATE 83552

[1](#)B. SKOPJE 418

[1](#)C. SKOPJE 476

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The Ambassador delivered ref A points on NATO enlargement and required reform steps to Deputy FM Petrov and National NATO Coordinator Dimitrov on June 19. In response, Petrov reiterated the GOM's commitment to focusing on NATO reforms, but noted challenges the government faces in passing a liberal religious freedom law. He said phase II of decentralization would begin on time, noted movement toward improved intelligence oversight and reform, and highlighted ongoing operations to root out the Macedonian "tobacco mafia" as evidence of the GOM's commitment to combating corruption. Petrov also mentioned a GOM proposal to allow visa-free travel to Macedonia for Greek citizens as an example of a confidence-building measure between Skopje and Athens. Dimitrov added that the GOM would incorporate the reform measures outlined by the Ambassador in Macedonia's next Annual National Program, and would seek to demonstrate in the document the sustainability of the reforms implemented. Although the GOM continues to state its intent to focus on NATO reforms, we would like to use the EAPC Security Summit in Ohrid and FM Milososki's July visit to Washington to help stiffen Macedonian resolve. Both occasions should also be used to clarify USG expectations of GOM behavior in relation to Greece, the name issue, and the 1995 Interim Accord. End Summary.

NATO ENLARGEMENT AND THE NEED TO FOCUS ON REFORMS

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Ambassador briefed Deputy FM Petrov and National NATO Coordinator Dimitrov June 19 on ref A points regarding the need for the GOM to focus on specific reforms in order for Macedonia to be prepared for a NATO invitation in 2008. (NOTE: FM Milososki was unavailable, due to travel out of country the week of June 18-22.) The Ambassador told DFM Petrov that the U.S. believes an enlarged NATO will contribute to regional security and stability, wants Macedonia to succeed in its NATO membership bid, and wants to work with the GOM to help it succeed. Contrary to local media reports after the June 10 meeting in Tirana between the Adriatic Charter prime ministers and President Bush, however, there would be no "package approach" to a membership invitation. NATO would assess the individual performance of

each candidate. The Ambassador added that the reftel points should not be understood to constitute a "checklist" for membership, and stressed that all 26 NATO members would have to decide that they "wanted Macedonia as a member of the club."

IMPLEMENT POLITICAL AGREEMENT, DECENTRALIZATION, POLICE REFORMS...

13. (SBU) Noting USG appreciation for Macedonia's military contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Ambassador pointed out that there was more to do on other fronts. The government needed to ensure implementation of the May 29 agreement reached with eAlbanian opposition party DUI (ref B). It also needed to adopt and implement a strategy on equitable representation, with clear benchmarks for progress and a sanctions clause to enforce compliance with the strategy. Phase II of the decentralization would have to begin on time, and the government needed to implement the Law on Police and ensure that ethnically mixed police patrols were able to patrol in areas where such a presence was warranted.

...JUDICIAL REFORMS, COMBAT CORRUPTION, NAME DISPUTE, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

14. (C) To further strengthen its candidacy, the Ambassador said, the GOM would have to fully implement the Law on Courts and the National Strategy for Judicial Reforms, bring several high-level corruption cases to trial, and ensure political dialogue between the government and opposition continued on implementing NATO-required reforms. It was imperative that Skopje sustain efforts to resolve the name issue through the

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UN process, avoiding provocation or responses to perceived provocation from Athens. It would be necessary to pass a liberal religious freedom law that met Venice Commission standards. However, given recent provocative actions in Macedonia by members of the Serb and Greek Orthodox Churches (septel), it would be preferable to delay passage of such a bill if it did not meet Venice Commission standards. Full restitution for nationalized properties belonging to religious groups, continued defense reforms, and intelligence reforms that would ensure the security of classified information rounded out the list of requirements.

NO SURPRISES, GOVERNMENT FOCUSED ON NATO REFORMS

15. (C) DFM Petrov said the list contained "no surprises." He noted that most of the items mentioned already were part of the GOM's governing program. Each government session "begins with an update on progress on meeting NATO standards," he said. On the religious freedom law, he pointed out that both the Islamic Community of Macedonia (ICM) and the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) opposed a more liberal law that would, they charged, open the door to radical religious elements. The positions of both the ICM and MOC, he argued, represented the views of "98 percent of Macedonia's religious believers."

16. (C) Petrov said implementation of decentralization was proceeding well, and that some 20 municipalities would participate in phase II of that process, due to begin July 1. Phase II of decentralization had been politicized, he said, but the process would move forward. On the political dialogue issue, he said that that process already had moved to Parliament. (NOTE: In fact, the political dialogue is taking place in the context of DUI's return to Parliament, but the process itself continues between the two parties to the May 29 agreement -- VMRO-DPMNE and DUI. END NOTE.)

17. (SBU) The Parliament was engaged in a discussion of intelligence oversight, Petrov reported. There was a government proposal already under discussion on reforming the intelligence services by bringing them under one roof to enhance operational efficiency. Referring to the

government's anti-corruption efforts, he pointed to an ongoing operation to root out the "tobacco mafia" in Macedonia as the main task facing the GOM's organized crime fighting unit. On defense reforms, Petrov said the Ministry of Defense had faced difficulties expending its allocated budget, and suggested the MOD had experienced problems in properly executing tenders for goods and services.

¶18. (SBU) Petrov said that the GOM was considering a proposal to reach out to the Greeks on the name issue, primarily by deciding to allow Greek citizens to enter Macedonia with just an id card, rather than a passport. He did not comment on the issue of avoiding provocative actions or counter-reactions on the name issue.

INTEGRATING THE LIST OF TASKS INTO MACEDONIA'S NATO ANP

¶19. (SBU) NATO Coordinator Dimitrov passed on Macedonia's thanks for the positive message that had come from the June 10 meeting in Tirana between President Bush and the A-3 prime ministers. He acknowledged that the list of action items presented by the Ambassador would help the government focus its efforts, especially as his office worked to prepare Macedonia's Annual National Program (ANP) for NATO membership. The ANP, due at the end of summer, would highlight the country's achievements, as well as the areas in which it still had work to do. It also would include a section on tasks to be sustained and completed after/after the NATO Summit in 2008, to demonstrate that a system was in place to ensure the sustainability of the government's NATO reform efforts. Dimitrov said he would share the tasks list with Prime Minister Gruevski. (NOTE: We also briefed President Crvenkovski's Chief of Staff on the list on June

¶20. END NOTE>)

COMMENT

¶10. (SBU) The GOM continues to talk the talk on NATO reforms; in some areas, such as anti-TIP efforts, it is walking the walk. Despite Dimitrov's best intentions and Petrov's suggestion that the government continues to focus on NATO

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reforms, PM Gruevski and his team will need continual prodding and motivation over the next three months to take the tough steps required. Things are moving in the right direction on a number of fronts (ref C), but we would like to use the upcoming EAPC Summit Macedonia will host in Ohrid, and FM Milososki's July 10 meeting with the Secretary, to help stiffen the government's resolve.

MILOVANOVIC